



Department of Justice

High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project

Baltimore, Maryland

Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Baltimore metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Baltimore area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore County
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- City of Baltimore
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Federal Protective Service (FPS)
- Howard County
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police
- Maryland Emergency Management Agency
- Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems
- Maryland State Police
- Maryland Transportation Authority Police
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)
- U.S. Park Police (USPP)
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS)
- U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Baltimore metropolitan area through the implementation of two interoperability solutions. The solutions introduce a new wide-area interoperability resource and also support the use of existing, disparate interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to foster a working relationship between local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability objectives for the area.

The first solution implemented a federal interoperability channel to support interagency communications during an emergency response. DOJ installed a 350-watt conventional narrowband repeater and five voted receivers strategically located to provide portable coverage throughout the Baltimore metropolitan area. Hosted and maintained by the FBI, the new very high frequency (VHF) interoperability channel provides a means for wide-area interagency communications where that capability had not existed

previously. While primarily reserved for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses, the channel can be used for daily operations that involve interagency communications.

Federal agencies that have direct access to the federal interoperability channel include—ATF, CBP, ICE, DEA, FBI, USMS, USPP, and USSS. This federal interoperability channel can be patched into key local and state agency communications systems throughout the region via radio frequency control stations located at the dispatch centers. Control stations were installed at City of Baltimore, DEA, FPS, Maryland State Police, USPIS, and USPP dispatch centers to provide access to the federal interoperability channel. Through these various methods of connectivity, the new federal interoperability channel enables local, state, and federal agencies operating on disparate radio systems to communicate while using their own agency’s radio system.

To support interoperable communications on-scene, the second solution provided a mobile audio switch, a variety of VHF, ultra high frequency (UHF), and 800 megahertz radios, and connecting cables to support various radio systems. The mobile audio switch is operated, maintained, and available for interagency deployment by the FBI. In addition to providing support during emergency responses, the mobile audio switch supports routine, short-term tactical engagements and complements other existing mobile audio switches in use throughout the Baltimore metropolitan area.

To coordinate common operating procedures for the new interoperability solutions, DOJ is working with the Central Maryland Area Regional Communications Committee (CMARC) to identify federal participants to join the local and state agency members. This collaborative effort will result in the development of standard operating procedures to address rules of use for operating on the federal interoperability channel and deploying the mobile resource. Stakeholders continue to meet to discuss interoperability efforts in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies future access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with stakeholder support, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

Federal Interoperability Channel/FBI Mobile Audio Switch

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